

Nether Stowey Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123789
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327989
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Joanna Pike

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	161
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Harkness
Headteacher	Hugh Taunton
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mill Close Nether Stowey Bridgwater TA5 1NX
Telephone number	01278 732508

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
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Fax number

01278 733860

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This small primary school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. The school manages a before-and after-school club. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and come from privately owned homes in the village and surrounding area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but proportions can be much higher in some year groups. Most of these pupils have difficulties with speech and language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to leadership and management. The overall effectiveness of Nether Stowey is inadequate. The school is providing a satisfactory standard of education; nonetheless, leadership and management are inadequate as the headteacher is not providing clear direction and determination in raising standards and achievement. Discussions and responses to the parent questionnaire indicate that many parents, some governors and a few staff have serious concerns about the leadership of the headteacher. Governors know the school well. They identified their concerns about the headteacher and sought support from the local authority. However the weakness has not been swiftly and effectively tackled. Key leaders are not being well led in monitoring areas of the school such as teaching, tracking pupils' progress and analysing data. Overall key leaders do not demonstrate the capacity to improve because they are not having enough impact on improving these important areas as a means of raising pupils' standards and achievement.

Standards across the school have remained broadly average for several years, and progress and achievement have been satisfactory. Children start in the Reception class below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress and by the end of the year most are on track to reach average levels. In Years 1 to 6 pupils make slower progress, but their achievement overall is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are reaching broadly average levels in their work. In Year 2 there are signs that progress is improving, especially in writing and mathematics.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practice is inconsistent because teachers do not have systematic guidance and support on how to improve what they do. Good relationships result in pupils being confident to have a go at challenges set in lessons. Group activities are well matched to pupils' needs and this helps all abilities to make satisfactory gains in their learning. However, too much time is spent by teachers in talking to the whole class, which limits opportunities for pupils to be actively learning. Teaching assistants are well used during group activities.

The satisfactory curriculum has a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Pupils say they would like more exciting and practical activities, although they generally enjoy their current activities. The school recognises the need to inject more vibrancy into activities, but their plans are at an early stage of development. Trips, special events and clubs all enrich pupils' experiences and they value these opportunities.

Staff know the pupils well. Pupils are confident about who to go to if they are upset or being bullied as their care, guidance and support are satisfactory. At the time of the inspection safeguarding procedures met requirements. Outstanding provision for pupils who go to the wrap-around care club results in high levels of enjoyment and good gains in their personal development. Pupils have individual targets in writing, but do not always know these or the steps they need to make to reach them because teachers do not refer to them enough in lessons.

Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, and work well together. Pupils have an appreciation of their local community, but their understanding of other cultures and the diversity in Britain is less well developed. Attendance has improved and is now close to the national average. Pupils benefit from the

good opportunities they have to contribute to the school and local community such as by being a peer mentor.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good as a result of good leadership and management in this part of the school. The effective induction arrangements ensure that children quickly settle in. They enjoy their learning because adults plan a good range of imaginative and exciting activities. Adults make the most of these activities, being adept at extending children's ideas. This results in children making good progress. Over the last two years children have started in the Reception class below the levels typically expected. By the end of the year almost all are achieving well and are on track to reach average levels or better. A good balance between tasks that children choose and ones which teachers lead helps develop good independent learning skills. Adults monitor and record children's progress carefully, and the 'Look, listen and learn' books celebrate these achievements in an attractive way that is shared with parents. Next steps in learning are identified and this helps tasks to be well matched to children's needs. Care and welfare are real strengths and ensure that all children feel safe and secure. Good use is made of the outdoor area which contributes well to children's creative and physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Urgently improve the capacity of senior leadership in order to drive up standards and raise achievement more quickly.
- Strengthen procedures that allow governors to monitor more thoroughly and hold the school to account more critically.
- Ensure that monitoring of teaching, tracking of pupils' progress and analysis of data are more rigorous in identifying and remedying key weaknesses.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils reach broadly average standards and achieve satisfactorily. Standards reached by Year 2 pupils have declined recently and were significantly below average last year, because the cohort contained a greater proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many of the current pupils make good progress in Year 2, especially in writing and mathematics, but their progress and achievement since joining Year 1 are only satisfactory overall. In Year 6 standards improved last year to be significantly above average because this year group had a small proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a higher proportion of more-able pupils. The current Year 6 is a lower-attaining group. These pupils achieve satisfactorily and are on track to reach broadly average standards by the time they leave.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, but do not always make healthy choices in the school dining room. Their awareness of safety is good, and they behave sensibly around the school. They feel that bullying is dealt with satisfactorily. Pupils treat each other with respect and work well together. Although the close links with the church help support pupils' spiritual awareness, their development in this aspect is satisfactory. Pupils who attend the

wrap-around care club really value the excellent range of activities they can take part in. Other clubs are also much appreciated and contribute to pupils' enjoyment. The school council is effective in giving pupils a voice in the school, and the creation of the wild area is an exciting achievement. Pupils make a good commitment to helping within the school and the local community, but their knowledge of others' beliefs and traditions much further from the school is not developed well enough. Pupils' average literacy and numeracy skills prepare them adequately for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers plan effectively so that learning is built up in steps. When teachers use a range of imaginative activities pupils' interests are captured so they concentrate well, but this not always the case. Pupils know what they are going to learn because teachers tell them at the beginning of lessons. They learn well when teachers remind them of their targets or make explicit the small steps they need to make in the lesson. This good practice is not consistent across the school. Sometimes pupils are not given enough time to consolidate their learning or the pace slows and so pupils 'switch off' or waste time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

More varied writing tasks are helping pupils to develop different writing styles and to sustain their ideas. The school has not yet fully developed links between different subjects and so opportunities for pupils to apply their writing, number and communication and technology skills are limited. The good provision of sports activities is much enjoyed by pupils and contributes to their understanding of the importance of healthy exercise. Art has a high profile in the school, but pupils say that they would like more drama and musical opportunities. Younger pupils' awareness of sustainable living and responsibility towards living things is aided by them growing vegetables and flowers in their school garden.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because of the satisfactory support they receive. Their needs are well known and appropriate individual plans are in place. However, the unclear leadership and management structure hampers the evaluation of the impact of the school's actions in this area. Close links with a range of external agencies are used when necessary to supplement the support given to vulnerable pupils. At the time of the inspection effective policies and procedures were in place to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils do not always have a clear idea of how well they are doing or how to improve. Teachers' marking does not regularly give clear advice on how pupils can improve their work and they are not always given time to follow up the advice. Pupils do not yet have individual targets in mathematics or reading and their writing targets are not used enough in lessons to help them progress. The wrap-around care club provision is outstanding. Pupils arrive bursting with enthusiasm to get involved in one of the excellent range of extremely well-planned activities. Relationships are excellent. Policies and procedures to ensure pupils' well-being are thorough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Strategic planning is weak and does not include all the key priorities because analysis by the school is not thorough enough. Monitoring of teaching is carried out regularly by the headteacher and key leaders, but because it lacks rigour and focus, the impact on improving practice is limited. The overlap between key leaders' roles causes a lack of clarity about responsibilities. The tracking systems are beginning to help teachers and key leaders identify underachieving pupils and take action. However, key leaders do not have an overview of standards and progress across the school and this hampers efforts to address weaknesses. Consequently, pupils in some classes and in some subjects make better progress than others. The local authority carried out a review recently and is providing the school with support, but as yet there is little impact. The school has not evaluated how successful it is in promoting community cohesion, neither is there a plan in place. The school works well with its local community. However, pupils' understanding of belonging to the global community, and their awareness of the diversity of cultures and traditions in Britain is not sufficiently developed.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Nether Stowey Church of England Primary School, Nether Stowey TA5 1NX

It was good to come and see you at your school! Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during our visit. Nether Stowey is a satisfactory school, but we think it needs some extra help to become even better. We appreciated the good discussions we had with some of you. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know.

- You make satisfactory progress and reach average standards by the time you leave.
- The children in the Reception class have a good start to school.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Your teachers make sure that work is matched to your abilities, but sometimes you spend too much time listening to teachers talk and not working on your own or with your groups.
- Your behaviour is good and you like helping to contribute towards the school community in lots of ways such as by being peer mediators.
- You want more practical activities in your curriculum and we agree that this will help you to enjoy your learning more.
- The school makes sure that you all are safe, settled and secure.

Although there are some good things about your school, we have recommended it gets extra help and inspectors will return to check that everything is going to plan.

We have asked your school to do the following things.

- Improve the way the school is managed so that everyone knows what they need to do and concentrates their efforts on making things better.
- Ensure that the governors are better informed and make sure that the leadership of the school improves.
- Keep a closer check on your progress so teachers can spot those falling behind and to help the teaching become even more exciting.

Thank you again for all your help.

Yours faithfully

Joanna Pike

Lead inspector